

technologies. The year ahead will also present opportunities to study emerging privacy issues, such as the use of full body scanners at our airports and threats to online privacy.

The 112th Congress affords all of us in Congress an opportunity to make sure that this universal right to be left alone remains viable in the digital age.

I commend the many stakeholders and leaders from across the Nation who are holding events to commemorate Data Privacy Day. I look forward to working with Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle, and in both Chambers, on legislation to better protect the privacy rights of all Americans.

STATE OF THE UNION SEATING GESTURE

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, on Tuesday we made history in a small but significant way here in Congress. When we filed into the House Chamber for the President's annual State of the Union Address, many of us cast aside a long-held custom and crossed the aisle—literally—and sat together rather than divided by party. In some cases, as with my colleagues from my home State of Colorado, we sat by State delegation, Republicans and Democrats together.

I advocated for that change as a symbolic gesture. It was something I have done since I served in the Colorado State House.

In the days leading up to Tuesday's speech, folks here, and in the media, had a lot of fun comparing our plans to finding a date to a high school dance. They started speculating on what was next—trust falls? A ropes course? I am an old mountaineer—I have been joking that the aisle has become a mountain to climb.

And while those jokes have been entertaining for us inside the beltway, I think the media's interest in the drama highlights part of the problem that led me to call for a change in the way we sit during the State of the Union.

My staff did quite a bit of research on the history of the State of the Union Address, and they couldn't find any historical reason for divided seating. It seems to have developed along with the evolution of broadcast journalism.

So it appears that the media's hunger for drama—and our own need to use the media to project fierce party unity to the audience at home—has made the State of the Union like a pep rally—or a kind of sideshow to the main event. We've lost our focus on the content of the speech in an effort to get a moment of air time or a good headline.

I will be the first to admit that Tuesday's new seating arrangements aren't going to suddenly change the atmosphere here in Congress. But I hope it was the start of a new tradition. It certainly was a step in the right direction. Coloradans and Americans overwhelmingly supported the idea. It is some-

thing Americans are hungering for—I was just the messenger. There is no question it got us talking to people outside our comfort zones. I think the result was a more respectful—and less divided—State of the Union Address.

And I bring this up today—2 days after the State of the Union—because I don't want this to be an anomaly—a brief moment of half-hearted kumbaya before we slip back into our old habits. There was an even more serious reason for bringing us all together. We are not just divided during the President's State of the Union Address—it is nearly every day—in Washington and on the campaign trail.

If you go out and talk to citizens—as I do when I am in Colorado—the vast majority of people say they are frustrated with the bickering in Washington, and they believe it is hurting our Nation. The words used by politicians and commentators on the right and the left have become over the top—even violent.

After the horrific events of January 9, it is only natural that we ask whether there is a connection between the fact that Congresswoman GIFFORDS was the subject of violent gun metaphors on the campaign trail and the attack by a disturbed gunman only a few months later.

I, personally, think it would be simplistic to believe that one was the sole—or even a part—cause of the other. But it is incontrovertible that the level of violence and vitriol in our political language has been escalating year after year to a point where the space between rhetoric and reality has grown from a gap into a chasm.

To quote Jon Stewart of the “Daily Show” during his rally to restore sanity in politics: “We live now in hard times, not end times.” Yet you wouldn't know it by listening to the 24-hour media spin cycle.

I know GABBY well. She represents the district my father represented for 30 years. I grew up in Tucson, and a piece of me will always be rooted in its sandy soil. It is a border district, full of independent westerners whose ancestors made a good living there, despite harsh conditions and punishing temperatures. Its people include moderates as well as staunch liberals and strong-minded conservatives. In order to represent the area well, you really have to be outside politics, willing to hear everyone's point of view and to bring them together regardless of party. That is GABBY in a nutshell.

It would be a huge disservice to GABBY, Judge Roll, Christina Greene, and all of the other victims of the Tucson shooting if we didn't seize this moment to reflect on how to rein in the rhetoric—to become more civil to each other—and—as our President said eloquently—live up to their ideals for our democracy.

So sitting together was only a small step. I hope we can follow it up with more efforts to work together—perhaps bipartisan retreats—or, as was sug-

gested by a few of my colleagues—doing away with the aisle altogether.

I want to thank my co-leaders in this effort—Senator MURKOWSKI of Alaska, and Representatives HEATH SHULER and PAUL GOSAR. I look forward to working with them and any others in ways that will eventually help us solve the big challenges that confront us—because if we cannot sit together, we are kidding ourselves if we think we can win the global economic race, pay down our debt, develop a 21st century energy policy, fix our broken immigration system—or address any of the myriad other problems facing our country.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO JOHNNY THE BRAVE

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, today I wish to reflect on the courage and strength of Johnny Ties or as most people know him, Johnny the Brave.

Johnny lives in Gravette, AR, with his family who supports him with their faith and love. While he enjoys playing soccer, off the field he is a true warrior and champion who is setting a great example for us all.

Johnny is bravely battling an illness. I join his family, friends and community in showing just how proud we are of this amazing 8-year-old whose optimism and zest for life is something we can all learn from.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Johnny the Brave. •

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 2:23 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 359. An act to reduce Federal spending and the deficit by terminating taxpayer financing of presidential election campaigns and party conventions.

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

The message also announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bill:

H.R. 366. An act to provide for an additional temporary extension of programs under the Small Business Act and the Small Business Investment Act of 1958, and for other purposes.

The message further announced that pursuant to 15 U.S.C. 1024(a), and the order of the House of January 5, 2011, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the Joint Economic Committee: Mr. BRADY of Texas, Chairman, Mr. BURGESS of Texas, Mr. CAMPBELL of California, Mr. DUFFY of Wisconsin, Mr. AMASH of Michigan, and Mr. MULVANEY of South Carolina.

The message also announced that pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 1928a, clause 10 of rule I, and the order of the House of January 5, 2011, the Speaker appoints the following Member of the House of